

NSW INSTITUTE OF TEACHERS EXTERNAL ASSESSORS POLICY

The purpose of the *External Assessors Interim Policy* is to establish procedures for the identification and support of external assessors involved in accreditation at the level of Professional Competence.

The policy is interim. Ultimately external assessors will be teachers who have been accredited at the levels of Professional Accomplishment or Professional Leadership.

The purposes of the external assessors (EAs) are to assist the Institute in:

- building knowledge and expertise of Teacher Accreditation Authorities (TAAs) over time
- identifying apparent patterns of discrepancy in the accreditation reporting and judgements of Teacher Accreditation Authorities
- building qualitative data on the accreditation process and related issues on behalf of the profession.

The external assessor's review will be forwarded to the Teacher Accreditation Authority through the Institute. These reviews, over time, will inform TAAs in making accreditation decisions at the level of Professional Competence.

In addition to providing this advice to Teacher Accreditation Authorities, external assessors will assist in moderating and monitoring the accreditation at Professional Competence process across schools and school systems. The Institute will achieve this through monitoring any patterns of inconsistencies between the decisions of Teacher Accreditation Authorities and external assessors' reviews.

It is therefore imperative that teachers and Teacher Accreditation Authorities are confident that external assessors are impartial, ethical and highly skilled at analysing and synthesising written information. It follows that the processes for identifying external assessors must be rigorous, equitable and transparent and that the support provided to the external assessors is focussed, comprehensive and relevant.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

The External Assessors Interim Policy seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- a selection process for external assessors that is transparent, fair and rigorous
- provision of high quality support and training for external assessors
- a formal recognition process for the work of external assessors
- a reliable monitoring process of mandatory accreditation procedures.

CRITERIA AND PROCESSES FOR SELECTING EXTERNAL ASSESSORS

The criteria for the selection of external assessors focus on ability to support other teachers (particularly beginning teachers), capacity to make accreditation decisions, ability to work collegially and analytical skills. Selection criteria for the written applications are listed in Appendix A.

External assessors are drawn from all school contexts, as well as sectors. The extent of matching an assessor to a similar context is outlined later in this paper.

There is a written application process. Applications will comprise a brief employment history, a statement addressing the selection criteria and nomination of two referees, one of whom must be the principal or equivalent.

The emphasis is on an application for the training with the understanding that successful applicants may be selected as external assessors. Applicants will be asked to make a commitment to fulfil the role of an EA for two years.

The application process will be widely advertised. Principals/senior teachers will be asked to encourage suitable teachers to apply.

The emphasis is on having a pool of qualified EAs to draw on rather than having a group of appointed personnel.

TRAINING OF EXTERNAL ASSESSORS

Training and support for external assessors will involve key stakeholders and ensure a shared responsibility for the veracity of the process and the development of shared knowledge and understanding across sectors.

Training of the external assessors will include the following content:

- the importance of the role including the status of the assessors' decisions and understanding the impact of these decisions
- professional ethics – incorporating equity, confidentiality and objectivity of judgements
- unpacking of the standards – particularly for Professional Competence
- comparing and contrasting sample reports and evidence.

A major focus will be hands on simulations of assessing written evidence and writing reviews. These exercises will also serve as a further selection device. Should a participant continually make invalid judgements relating to the achievement of the standards, they will be excluded from the process.

RECOGNITION

Being an external assessor is an opportunity for teachers to contribute to the profession through assuring the quality of the teacher accreditation process. A reliable teacher accreditation process will be a significant factor in raising the status and standing of teachers.

Participation as an external assessor will contribute towards the achievement of accreditation at Professional Accomplishment.

External assessors will be granted time in the form of teacher relief/release – not only for training and the assessment process itself but for activities such as private research eg into syllabus documentation.

SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS ACCREDITATION AUTHORITIES

Teacher Accreditation Authorities will be encouraged to utilise the advice of the Institute with regard to the quality of reporting and moderation of judgement throughout the accreditation period, that is, before the Accreditation Report and supporting evidence are submitted to the Institute. The Institute may choose to use the opinions and expertise of the external assessors in the provision of this advice.

THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

TAA's will forward the Accreditation Report, supporting evidence and accreditation decision to the Institute. The Institute will allocate the documentation to an external assessor.

External assessors will work in regional groups and be able to seek advice from colleagues should they have doubts concerning any report or evidence.

External assessors' reviewing will focus on specific and diagnostic analysis of the report and supporting evidence in relation to whole of state practices. EA's reviews will provide advice on emphases and usefulness of the evidence, use of the evidence and other reporting to help assure the consistency of judgements and reports.

An external assessor's review will note where specific judgements within the reporting of the accreditation decision appear inconsistent with the state moderated position.

External assessors will be matched to new scheme teachers to the following extent:

- external assessors will work in the same sector as the candidate – government, Catholic systemic or independent
- primary teachers will assess primary teachers
- secondary teachers will assess secondary teachers within the same KLA wherever possible and have access to content specialists for less common subjects if required
- external assessors will be drawn from the full range of contexts within a sector eg low socioeconomic status, geographic isolation, but will not necessarily be matched to the same context.

The regional groups will comprise teachers from all sectors and most contexts.

The external assessor's review will be sent to the TAA via the Institute. (The Institute will monitor the quality of these reviews.) The TAA will provide a copy of the review to relevant staff as required to assist in building knowledge and expertise in the accreditation process.

There will be an evaluation of the process in 2006, including interviews with a random selection of Teacher Accreditation Authorities and new scheme teachers.

PROTOCOLS

Strict confidentiality will be maintained by all parties.

The external assessor will remain anonymous to the teachers being assessed and the Teacher Accreditation Authorities.

Should an external assessor need clarification from a Teacher Accreditation Authority, communication will be mediated through the Institute.

APPENDIX A SELECTION CRITERIA FOR THE APPLICATION FOR EXTERNAL ASSESSOR TRAINING

The selection criteria for external assessors are:

Essential

- recent successful classroom experience
- in-depth subject knowledge and knowledge of pedagogy
- excellent analytical and writing skills
- recent experience in supporting and mentoring other teachers particularly with regard to beginning teachers
- willingness to assume the role of an external assessor for a minimum of two years
- knowledge of the NSW Institute of Teachers Professional Teaching Standards.

Desirable

- current employment as a teacher or principal in a NSW school or schools.